



Edition

The newsletter for members of the
Editors' Association of Canada, Toronto branch

September 2004

Program Report

New Horizons: Expanding Your Business

by Sharon Aschaiek

They are questions that many freelance editors ask themselves, often over and over again: Can I keep functioning as a one-person operation, or do I need to grow my company and bring new people on board? If so, where do I start first? Should I hire employees, partners, or contractors? And can I really afford it?

Last spring, EAC Toronto branch members got some answers to these questions via a presentation called New Horizons: Expanding Your



Greg Ioannou and Howard Whittaker share their business experience with EAC Toronto members.

Business beyond the One-Person Operation. On Monday, May 31, 2004, Greg Ioannou, president of Toronto-based publishing services company Colborne Communications, and Howard Whittaker, partner of Ottawa-based marketing and communications firm GordonGroup, shared their respective successes and some cautionary tales with the group.

Established in 1987, GordonGroup (originally called The Gordon Creative Group) began as a one-man operation until Whittaker joined in 1989. By 1996, operatives of this branding and creative concepts company saw the need to add an editorial department to its business infrastructure.

continued on page 4

In This Issue

- Program Report 1
- EAC Toronto Executive 2
- Fall Seminars..... 2
- Industry Briefs 3
- The Thesaurus of Injury Prevention Terminology..... 6
- Welcome! To EAC Toronto Members 7
- EAC Toronto Meeting Schedule... 7
- Announcing EAC September Meeting 7
- Networking..... 9
- Workshops, Reading, Conferences and Festivals 9
- Hotline Registration 11
- Hotline Report 11

New Horizons *from page 1*

“We recognized the importance of words to our business,” said Whittaker to the crowd. “To be a better company, we needed people with the right skills on board.”

And so the company brought aboard editor, writer, and educator Peter Moskos to form a new division, The Gordon Writing Group. The range of the company’s editorial department has grown dramatically since then, now encompassing under the GordonGroup umbrella several in-house and freelance writers and editors who work on business reports, speeches, books, and magazines, and print advertising and Web copy.

Whittaker told the crowd that one of the key considerations when hiring new staffers is to lay out the terms on paper.

“A written agreement helps to define responsibilities. It can help in many respects to have something documented, especially if something goes wrong later,” he said.

However, written agreements can’t solve everything, particularly if you’ve hired not a subordinate, but a partner. As an example of the kinds of communication issues that can arise in a partnership situation, Ioannou related a story about the fateful day when the company fax machine died.

“There were seven partners. One said we couldn’t afford a new one [fax machine]; one wanted to get a used one; one wanted a new one; two of us wanted a high-tech \$16,000 one,” he recalled. “There was no way to reconcile it; we all had different needs.”

However, things can and do go

wrong when you work with others, Whittaker said, and it’s important to keep that in perspective.

“You have to trust people. Mistakes will be made, that’s just part of the process.”

When hiring a partner or associate, the best way to avoid errors and misunderstandings is to establish up front the shared short-term and long-term goals. He added that it’s also a priority for him to have

“We track billable hours, so it’s irrelevant when people come in and leave.”

in-house employees blend into the corporate culture.

Ioannou allows for a more relaxed environment for Colborne employees.

“We have people coming in at 10 a.m. or 10:30 a.m. and we don’t notice. We track billable hours, so it’s irrelevant when people come in and leave,” Ioannou said.

For independent editors contemplating hiring a salaried employee, Whittaker said, one of the biggest factors is whether they’ll be able to afford the hire over a sustained period, particularly when the going gets rough.

“Cash flow can become a problem, because money for the work always comes in later, but you have to pay first,” Whittaker said. “You can run deep into debt.”

When business is brisk, he added, having employees is valuable because you have a team you can count on to help build the bottom line. When business is sluggish, however, contractors are better

because you only pay them per job, rather than a salary with benefits. But then again, he said, contractors can charge hefty rates for individual projects.

Ioannou added that if you choose to hire employees, you have the opportunity to build a cooperative, enjoyable work environment, and forge positive long-term relationships with staff.

“We make a real investment in new employees and put energy into developing their career paths,” Ioannou said. “The hope is that they’ll be around long enough that we can teach them properly and we’ll all reap the benefits. There’s also a real comfort in working with the same person over a long while.”

Both Ioannou and Whittaker said that hiring the right mix of committed, qualified people, combined with solid accounting and innovative marketing, can lead to more interesting and better-paying projects, and to a larger and stronger company.

Both also agreed that another major benefit of bringing others on board is that you don’t have to do everything yourself anymore.

“There’s a period at the start where you have to invest a lot of time. Now I have a young family, and I’m able to spend less time at work,” Whittaker said.

“I try to do 35 hours a week,” Ioannou said. “I used to do all-nighters, but when you’re larger, you don’t have to do the insane hours.”

Visit the Web sites of Colborne Communications at <http://www.colcomm.ca/> and gordongroup at <http://www.gordongroup.com/>. **E**